

Grabau, Joseph. "Commentary on IV.4.9: The Death of a Friend." In *The Confessions for iPad*, edited by Allan Fitzgerald and Noël Dolan, translated by Maria Boulding. Villanova University, 2015.

Augustine and the Death of a Friend. Augustine narrates a poorly formed example of friendship in his own young adult life, for it failed to cling only to God through the Spirit of Christ (*Conf.* 4.4.7). This paragraph extends his own self-criticism for having failed to adjust his own sentiments to reflect the divine and rational order of love. It is here that one will find a list of the psychological symptoms Augustine experienced.

Chief of these was his grief, which Augustine details in theological light. In short, it was for a failed understanding of created being that the young Augustine was so overcome with emotion. It was a common topic in Hellenistic philosophy, namely how to manage effectively the emotions. Stoics and Epicureans comment on this. Directly tied to the body and physical experience of the "passions", emotional theory was an important element in particular of Stoic epistemology.

Augustine states that by suffering any irrational experience of *grief* (for example), without properly ordered affections, would bring harm to one's soul. That is just what the present context suggests, that Augustine was unable to cope effectively after the loss of the friend, with the result that he eventually sought to escape in order to avoid constant reminders of his lost friend. In other words, he *ran from his trouble!*

Therefore, the younger Augustine also failed to recognize the significance of baptism—even to the point of criticizing his friend for accepting the sacrament so late. Augustine had no baptismal or sacramental theology at this time. In one sense, Augustine was too skeptical and too literalist; the sacramental imagination that readers find in books eleven, twelve, and thirteen is still in development. Augustine will come to suggest that friendship itself is a kind of sacrament. See Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).